

The Navigator



The Newsletter of Saint Brendan's Monastic Fellowship

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CONTROL YOURSELF?

Sue Andraeas, Prioress

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” —2 Peter 1:5-8

We did it. It took a few years, but we made it through the Fruit of the Spirit, looking at each facet and realizing there's more here than fodder for greeting cards and cute signs to hang on our walls. This is gritty stuff, not for wimps! When Alan and I were looking at which one of us should write which part of the first 2021 newsletter—which should have been what happened in the last 2020 newsletter—he decided I should write about self-control. He says I'm more self-controlled. That's a joke. Besides, self-control is the one that bugs me the most.

All the other ones (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, patience) seem to be geared mostly toward how we treat others. Self-control is different. It seems to be more of a default setting, of a foundational framework, for the rest. Otherwise, we might be able to pull off being kind, or peaceful, or patient, or gentle for a little while—or with certain people. But unless we are self-controlled, it all goes out the window when we're tired, or busy, or under stress. It's tough to be kind and gentle during a pandemic combined with political unrest for example.



I've also wondered, in the past, why the term 'self-control' would be used here in the first place. After all, isn't that another synonym for self-discipline? To be disciplined, to be a disciple of Christ, shouldn't even be part of a list—and certainly not near the *end* of that list! If discipline and self-control are the same, or even related, shouldn't this be at the beginning of the list? Wouldn't that make a better pattern—one that starts with becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ and ends with love? If I were in charge, I would have written it that way. I'm not in charge. Thank God!!

In years to come, it will be important to keep these articles in context. At least it will be for me. 2020-2021 are the years of Covid-19: masks, closed churches, closed businesses, closed

schools, social distancing, social media meetings, social unrest. (What a paradox! That this pandemic would lead to cliches of non-social 'social' alternatives due to isolation!) These are also the Years of the surgeries here at Saint Brendan's as Alan goes under general and local anesthesia and scalpels time and time again—and then many, MANY hours of physical therapy and limited activity that follow.

They are the years when I learned the strengths—and limitations—of my muscles and bones; of how many days I can get up before 4:00 AM and work until after 9:00

PM with no breaks except a few moments to eat; of learning how to do all of my office work for the chapel, the homestead, and our personal bookkeeping—and all correspondence—in 30

IN THIS ISSUE OF "THE NAVIGATOR"

Control Yourself?	1
Monastic Muse	3
Spiritual Fruit—Mercy & Humility	3
Holy Hymnody	4
The Final Word: Tertullian	6

minutes a day—or less. They were also the years when I was convinced the Lord has decided Saint Brendan’s has run its course and He is now dismantling this ministry and I’m just too busy to notice—when, instead, He is expanding our horizons beyond our wildest dreams. The years when we lost friends, and family, and our queen goat (she was more like a partner in herd maintenance), and the loss is crippling. The years of a drought that reduced the hay crop by over half. The years of relentless need all around.

These are the years when many of us found out what it’s like to sink to the bottom—and learned that there is rock down there—and that Rock has a name. Jesus. Self-control while hanging on by a thread? I can’t tell you how often I wanted to throw the phone out the window rather than answer it but answered it anyway. I wanted to hide in a back room but realized the only way we’re all going to come out of ‘these years’ is to muster up the last of my strength, head out in the cold, and help our neighbors and friends who are struggling through their own list of ‘these are the years.’ And Alan wants me to write about self-control? I want to go throw rocks in the pond and kick things and scream, “WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME, GOD!!? JUST **TELL ME!!**” (I did—throw rocks and kick and scream. And He did. Answer me, that is. Stay tuned.)

Like all the other facets of the Fruit of the Spirit, self-control is part of a larger whole. Even when Peter writes it into his list at the beginning of his 2nd letter, it’s still the same thing, the same Greek word used in Galatians and in 2 Peter. It is fruit OF THE SPIRIT, not of ourselves. We don’t have to produce it. (WHEW!!!) It doesn’t matter what this is ‘the year of’ or what kind of predicament we are in, or whether we are a mature Christian or a new convert. NONE of these ‘fruits’ (and they are all just one) are skills, or talents, or personality traits. They are the standard operating procedures of heaven that pour through us when we have the sense to get out of heaven’s way. They are not earthly niceties but heavenly norms. As we learned last time (meaning last summer!! Oh my...), this fruit grows out of the hummus, or compost, of our dying to self.



“No matter what He asks, no matter what He wants,...no matter what the cost, no matter what the consequence; if it is His desire, then it is for our benefit, and to His glory.”

So,...if we are to die to self, how can we be *self*-controlled? Let’s do a quick look at the word Peter (and Paul) use for self-control. It’s a compound word, pronounced something like ‘enkrat’-i-ah.’ The ‘en’ part is a prefix that means ‘in’ or ‘with.’ The root part means ‘dominion’ or ‘mastery.’ But the cool thing is that, while this word means ‘proceeding out from within oneself,’ it does not mean *by* oneself. In other words, neither Peter nor Paul had any desire to imply that WE are the ones having dominion or mastery! The online website of [Helps Ministries](#) sums it up this way, and I’ll quote them directly: “For the believer, *egkráteia* (“self-control, Spirit-control”) can only be accomplished *by the power of the Lord*. Accordingly, *egkráteia* (“true mastery from within”) is explicitly called a *fruit of the Holy Spirit* (Gal 5:23).”

Back to my throwing rocks in the pond and kicking things and screaming. God answered that question rather quickly. Two words. And those two words have become the focal point of many conversations here at Saint Brendan’s, and the direction our year will take from here on out. “Worship Me.” Worship. Not study, not preach, not do, not control, not overcome. Worship. There’s only one way to worship, and that is to lay everything else aside. Not that there aren’t other things worth doing or thinking about! But worship requires ALL of those to take a back seat in order for God to have our entire attention, even if it’s just a few moments a day.

It’s within those times of worship when we hear what God wants of our lives, and we are given the means to accomplish His will. No matter what He asks, no matter what He wants, no matter what He takes from us or divvies out to us, no matter

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WE COVET YOUR PRAYERS!!!

Please continue to pray for the needs of Saint Brendan’s:

- For necessary remodeling of the Priory House so that we can host more retreatants and guests.
- For the continuing exterior and interior construction Holy Trinity Chapel, including flooring and the interior of the Sacristy.
- For discernment as we continue to define and refine Saint Brendan’s role in the Body of Christ and this local community.

what the cost, no matter what the consequence; if it is His desire, then it is for our benefit, and to His glory. The greatest form of worship is to receive Communion. The Eucharist. Our thankfulness for Christ's total surrender that demands us to participate in that total surrender. That gift to us cost God dearly. It cost Jesus dearly.

The fruit of the Spirit should cost us no less. It costs us our laying down our lives—every component of it—at Jesus' feet and letting Him do what He knows is best. The only self-control we need is to not squirm our way out of that relinquishment! To remain wholly surrendered. To truly worship. It's the only way to allow the Holy Spirit to have complete mastery and dominion over us.

Let's look at Peter's progression again (the verse at the top of this article): add to your faith goodness (moral virtue), then knowledge, then permission for the Holy Spirit to have mastery over every part of you, then don't give up, continue to become more like Jesus, develop a mutual affection for each other, then love sacrificially—even if it costs you everything. At the middle of that list, our knowledge must result in relinquishment, the fruit borne of the Holy Spirit taking control because we allow Him to. It's so easy! The only thing we need to control about ourselves is to relinquish all control to God and not take back control. No matter what. Even during 'these years.'

Rejoice!
Sue

MONASTIC MUSE

muse \ 'myüz \ **1:** *vb* to turn something over in the mind meditatively, **2:** to think reflectively, **3:** *n* a state of deep thought...

"Follow your trades as secondary, as something necessary for earning a livelihood. However, make the worship of God your main business."

—*Apostolic Constitutions* (c. 375-380), an early collection of eight treatises that provided apostolic and authoritative guidance on the conduct of believers, liturgy and worship, and church organization .

Spiritual Fruit: Mercy & Humility

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Ephesians 4:2-3

A 'rule of life' for a Christian has but one purpose: to help us become Christlike by imitating Christ, internally and externally, in our day-to-day lives. Saint Brendan's *Rule of Life* helps us strive toward that goal in three key areas—the 'fruit' of Christlikeness, the 'pillars' of Christlikeness, and the 'disciplines' of Christlikeness. As you can imagine, the fruit we're speaking of in our *Rule* is the Fruit of the Spirit; you know, the list we find in Galatians 5:22-23. And if you're a regular reader of this newsletter, you'll also know that we've been working through the individual facets of this fruit (i.e., love, joy, peace, etc.) for just over two years now, finishing with this issue of *The Navigator*.

Sue has the opening article because she has the last official 'fruit' on the list (and because I asked her to!), the fruit of self

-control. So, what am I writing about? Believe it or not, but we have more! *Wait a minute, Fr. Alan. The list stops with self-control. I know. I memorized that list in Sunday School!* Don't worry, I'm not contradicting what the Apostle Paul says in Galatians. However, in Saint Brendan's *Rule*, page 20, you'll read this:

"As a vital element of the Rule of Life for the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's, we seek to produce the fruit of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23—love, joy, peace, longsuffering (or patience), goodness, generosity (or kindness), faithfulness, gentleness (or meekness), and self-control (or temperance)—*as well as the additional virtues*

of mercy and humility [italics mine]. Taken together, these allow us to imitate the likeness of Jesus Christ as we cooperate with both God's grace and the indwelling Holy Spirit in order to produce that precious image within us."



Ah, value-added, virtuous fruit. Not fruit to replace the list in Galatians. Not even fruit to supplement the list in Galatians. But fruit to stand alongside of and cheer on the list in Galatians.

Fruit that helps to create a 'space' in our lives for the unfolding and flourishing of the Fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians. It's like that rule of thumb that says, "Before you begin a project, start with a clean workspace" (and I plan to learn that some day!). Consider mercy and humility as the workspace for the care and feeding of the other nine.

The Virtue of Mercy

What, then, do we mean when we refer to mercy and humility? Mercy, first. Did you know that the word 'mercy' is used 276 times in the King James Bible and that, throughout the Old Testament, it is used almost exclusively as an action of God toward His children? Mercy originates in the heart of God and He desires it as a quality that should also inhabit ours. What is mercy? It is godly compassion that flows out from deep love; holding back punishment even when justice demands it. It's also the catalyst that moves us to help others in desperate need or in difficult circumstances who don't have the means to overcome their own distress. Most of all, human mercy is an echo or expression of God's perfect mercy which is endless, enduring forever (Numbers 14:18; 1 Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 100:5; Psalm 136).

Mercy is also costly. Here's what I mean. When we repent and confess our sins, God pours out His mercy on us in the form of forgiveness (Ephesians 2:4-7). Even in the *Benedictus*, Zechariah sings of the remission of our sins through the tender mercies of God (Luke 1:78). But the source of that tender mercy was only made available at the expense of the violent death of His own Son, Jesus Christ—for without the shedding of blood, there

“Consider mercy and humility as the workspace for the care and feeding of the [Fruit of the Spirit].”

remains no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

As you can imagine—especially as we strive to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1)—the mercy we show to others may also cost us, and sometimes dearly. To extend the hand of mercy to someone who has hurt us or to someone in need may cause us pain, loss, time, and sacrifice; but how tender that mercy becomes to the other person! That's why Paul calls on us to put on tender mercies, bearing with one another and forgiving one another (Colossians 3:12).



As God has shown great mercy to us (for we are helpless and miserable without it!), we are to show mercy to others, especially to others in the household of faith who may stumble in weakness. That's not the time to flaunt our Christian pride and superiority, but a time to respond with the love of Christ to another's sins, difficulties, or needs. After all, just as we pray that God never gives up on us, when we extend mercy to others, it becomes our promise that we won't give up on them, either (cf. Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13; 12:7).

The Virtue of Humility

The Bible is far from silent about humility. In fact, it's a recurring admonition to every Christian (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). And if something is good for the Christian walk in general, it should be on steroids for those with a monastic heart and

**Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days--Let them flow in ceaseless praise.**

**Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.**

**Take my will and make it Thine--It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart--It is Thine own; It shall be Thy royal throne.**

"Take My Life and Let It Be"

Text: Frances R. Havergal (1874); Music: Henry A.C. Malan (1823)

intent! It was the example that Christ gave to the Church when He washed the feet of His disciples (John 13:4-5,15-17) and, amazingly, becomes the conduit for our blessing! Isn't that what Scripture says when we read that God resists the proud, "but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5)? And the best part is that we don't just receive this grace throughout our earthly lives, but that it will be poured upon us at our own resurrection to eternal life (Luke 14:7-14).

One definition of humility is 'low estate' (i.e., being held down or brought low; abasement). This kind of humility is often forced upon others by external powers, circumstances, or degradation and harassment (cf., Psalm 10:14). This isn't what God has in mind although many persecuted believers find themselves in these conditions. What God desires is that we willingly walk in the spirit and practice of humility as a vaccine to the prevailing culture of pride and arrogance. How do we grow in humility and put to death the temptation to pride, especially in ourselves?

There are incredible examples of this kind of humility. Think of people like St. Therese of Lisieux, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, or Brother Lawrence. They sought godly humility through the ministry of small things; desiring to serve the Lord and others through things that were menial rather than large and public and full of praises. They welcomed unjust criticism, befriended the unlovable, and helped those who were ungrateful. From washing pots and pans to bathing the limbs of lepers, they sought both God and grace in the smallest things around them even though they were born into families of privilege, position, and wealth. Our English word humility comes to us from the Latin word

"Dying to self, selfish ambitions, selfish desires, and all that is sinful within us provides the soil of humility from which God can harvest the Fruit of the Spirit."

humus which means 'fertile ground.' While humus is a soil characterized by dead and decaying matter, its also a surprising growth medium containing everything necessary to bring forth life! Likewise, humility is made up of dying things which brings richness into the Christian's life. Dying to self, selfish ambitions, selfish desires, and all that is sinful within us provides the soil of

humility from which God can harvest the Fruit of the Spirit. We can grow in humility by being obedient to the Lord, especially in the little things. Willingly submitting ourselves to one another for correction and admonition, and undertaking even seemingly insignificant tasks simply out of love for Christ, is a great place to start. In fact, a humble person will take the lowest position in a work, social, or family endeavor without experiencing any internal distress or lack of self-worth (yes, it is okay to be the last one picked for the kickball team in gym class!). That's because each 'dying to self' adds to the soil of humility where God's grace can flourish.



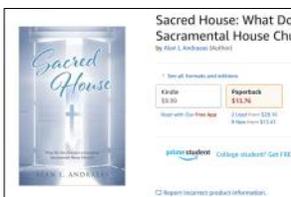
There we have it—the preparation of the garden bed through mercy and humility for the cultivation of the Fruit of the Spirit. Oh, that our lives would be spent in producing the image of Christ within us for the sake of others, for the building up of the Church, for the reconciliation of the world, and for the glory of God.

Rejoice!
Fr. Alan

HOUSEKEEPING



Saint Brendan's has a new website: www.saintbrendans-online.com. Take note, we are now a .com rather than a .org. We're also adding new download audio files under its own dropdown menu on the main page. It will get better with time.



Did you know that Fr. Alan's recent book, *Sacred House*, is available online at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and even Wal-Mart? The book examines the history of worship, the underpinnings of liturgical and sacramental worship, house churches across the centuries, and the special place given to house churches in the heart of God. Order a copy for yourself. Give a copy to someone you know. Makes a wonderful adult group-study text.

The Final Word: Tertullian (160-220 AD) — Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus, born in Carthage [now Tunisia] in the Roman province of Africa and perhaps the son of a Roman centurion; important early Christian theologian and prolific author who, as the Father of ecclesiastical Latin, was instrumental in shaping the vocabulary of Western Christianity.



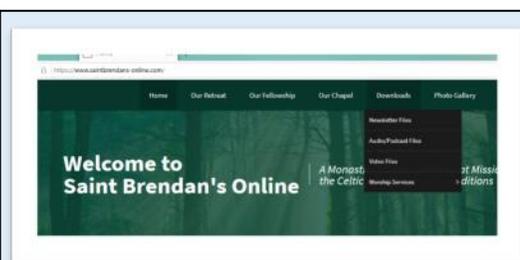
[NOTE: This text is drawn from Tertullian's defense of Christian faith and citizenship as addressed to Roman pagans.]

We are accused of being useless in the affairs of life. How in all the world can that be the case with people who are living among you, eating the same food, wearing the same attire, having the same habits, and enduring the same necessities of existence? We are not Indian Brahmans or Gymnosophists [*'naked philosophers', ancient Indian vegetarian ascetics who believed that even food and clothing were a detraction to ideal purity of thought*], who dwell in the woods and exile themselves from ordinary human life. But we journey with you in the world, abstaining from neither forum, meat market, bath, booth, workshop, inn, weekly market, nor any other place of commerce. We sail with you, serve in the military with you, and cultivate the ground with you. Even in the various arts, we make public property of our works for your benefit.

So in your long lists of those accused of many and various atrocities, has any assassin, any purse-snatcher, any man guilty of sacrilege, seduction, or stealing bathers' clothes, ever had his name entered as also being a Christian? Or when Christians are brought before you on the mere basis of their name, is there ever found among them an evildoer of this sort? It is always with *your* people that the prison is teeming. You find no Christian there, unless he is there for being a Christian. Or, if someone is there as something else, he is a Christian no longer.

Our discipline carries its own evidence in itself. We are not betrayed by anything else than our own goodness, just as bad men also become conspicuous by their own evil. For what mark do we exhibit except the prime wisdom that teaches us not to worship the frivolous works of the human hand? Our marks, rather, are the temperance by which we abstain from other men's goods, the chastity that we do not even pollute with a look, the compassion that prompts us to help the needy, the truth itself (which makes us offensive), and liberty, for which we have even learned to die.

We never deny the deposit placed in our hands. We never pollute the marriage bed. We deal faithfully with our wards. We give aid to the needy. We render to no one evil for evil. As for those who falsely pretend to belong to us—and whom we also repudiate—let them answer for themselves. In short, does anyone have a complaint to make against us on any other grounds (except for being a Christian)? It is for such a notable freedom from crime, for an honesty so great, for righteousness, for purity, for faithfulness, for truth, for the living God, that we are sentenced to the flames.



Let Us Know How We're Doing!

As you can imagine, the activities on a homestead keep us pressed against a wall. We need to make sure our time, energy, and resources are wisely spent. We've been taking extra time to add sermons, Bible studies, and video clips to the download feature of our website. Do you access them? Are they helpful? Please drop us an email and let us know. We are happy to do it, but only so long as they are beneficial. Thank you.

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